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DEPT FOR AF/W DENNISON, AF/RSA HARPOLE, AF/PDPA LISENBY,
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TAGS: [SCUL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [KCOR](#) [KPAO](#) [KISL](#) [NG](#)

SUBJECT: Embassy Iftaar Series Generates Substantial Goodwill During Ramadan

¶1. As part of post's Islamic outreach initiatives, Embassy Niamey sponsored a series of Iftaar dinners during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Four separate Iftaars were hosted by the Ambassador, the Charge d'Affaires, the PAO and the Public Affairs Section (PAS).

¶2. On September 10, Ambassador Allen sponsored an Iftaar dinner at her residence, which also functioned to introduce the newly arrived DCM, Management Officer, and Economic/Consular Officer to the community. Guests included high-level mission contacts in government, international organizations, civil society, and members of the diplomatic corps.

¶3. On September 17, PAS Niamey offered a presentation on "The Rights of Women in Islam" with presenter Haoua Maikodomi, President of local religious educational organization Association Tarbbiyat, and alumna of the International Visitors program "U.S. Political Process for Emerging Muslim Leaders" (January 7 - 25, 2008). The event was held at the American Cultural Center and was followed by an Iftaar dinner. Attendance was high, with over seventy participants, including GON representatives, religious leaders, women's rights and civil society organizations, and journalists from major television, radio, and print media. Mdm. Maikodomi's presentation was well received, and sparked lively debate during the question and answer period, particularly on issues regarding gender equality, domestic abuse, and inheritance rights. Mdm. Maikodomi also spoke positively of her experiences in the U.S. on the IV program and attested to the freedom and respect afforded to practitioners of Islam in the United States. The event garnered coverage by four television stations and resulted in articles in several local newspapers.

¶4. On September 19, Charge Whitaker hosted an Iftaar at the CMR for 50 attendees, including representatives of a broad spectrum of civil society representatives from associations ranging in interest from anti-trafficking in persons to anti-child labor to human rights. Others included GON officials, members of religious organizations, and international organization representatives. Charge Whitaker spoke on the spirit of Ramadan, noting both the exterior and interior aspects of fasting and sacrifice, as well as pointing out the growing significance of Islam in the United States, where freedom of religious practice is prized.

¶5. On September 24, the PAO closed out the mission's Ramadan programming by hosting an Iftaar at his residence. This event was geared toward PAS' most important working level contacts, and included representatives of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the OIC-sponsored Islamic University at Say, the National University, local Islamic associations, educational institutions, civil society NGOs, and major media owners, executives, and directors. Participation neared 100% of those invited, and several attendees pointedly expressed their admiration and appreciation for PAS' efforts to acknowledge their local religious traditions.

WHITAKER